

U. S. Department of the Interior  
Fish and Wildlife Service  
Sacramento River National Wildlife Refuge

**FINDING OF NO SIGNIFICANT IMPACT**

**Final Environmental Assessment for Fire Building  
At Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service (Service) has proposed to build a new fire building on Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (Refuge). Three alternatives, including the no action alternative, were described in the Environmental Assessment (EA) for the fire building (herein incorporated by reference). The proposed fire building will provide an office, fire cache, equipment storage, and fitness center for the North Central Valley Fire Management Zone fire program stationed at the Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex (Complex).

**Decision**

Following comprehensive review and analysis, the Service selected Alternative B, the proposed action, for implementation because it is the alternative that best meets the purpose and need.

**Alternatives Considered**

The following is a brief description of the alternatives for habitat restoration on the Afton Unit presented in the EA, including the selected alternative (Alternative B). For a complete description of each alternative, see the EA.

*Alternative A: Current Management (No Action)*

This alternative would maintain existing fire facilities at the Refuge without development of the fire building. The limited facilities include a fire cache and exercise equipment currently located in an equipment storage building built between 1937 and 1942. This building has no heating or cooling capabilities and has perpetual safety problems including a leaking roof, dry rot, and rodents. Limited office space is located in an office building built in 1939. Both of these buildings are eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) and are treated as historic buildings. This limits the amount of repairs or modifications that can be made to these buildings to improve working conditions for the fire crew. In addition, these buildings do not meet seismic standards. Fire equipment is currently stored in multiple equipment storage buildings or outside. All of the fire engines are parked outside exposing them to damage from the elements and rodents.

This alternative would not address the purpose and need for the action and would not help fulfill operational goals of the Refuge. These current fire facilities are inadequate for the staff needs and equipment is not able to be stored properly.

*Alternative B: Proposed Action (Preferred Alternative)*

With this alternative, the fire building would be located west of the bunkhouse, in what is a disturbed upland area. Vegetation consists primarily of yellow star thistle and invasive grasses. In

addition, several eucalyptus trees will need to be removed prior to the construction. These trees have previously been identified for removal in the Headquarters' Area Eucalyptus Removal Plan for Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge (USFWS 2004).

This location is the preferred site for the fire building. It is the northern most site to allow connection to the Refuge's wastewater treatment facility. Both electricity and water are easily accessible in this location.

#### *Alternative C: Alternate Location*

Under Alternative C, the fire building would be located west of the "pyrotech" building. A portion of the pyrotech building is used by Mendocino National Forest for the Organized Crew (OC) program's fire cache. The site is a disturbed upland area with vegetation consisting primarily of yellow star thistle and invasive grasses.

Under this alternative, a lift pump would need to be installed to allow connection from the fire building to the Refuge's wastewater treatment facility. Electricity is accessible at this site; however, water is not easily accessible. These items would add to the construction cost for the fire building, making it not the preferred site.

Furthermore, this location can be seen from the Refuge's auto tour route. The auto tour route receives an average of 57,500 visits annually (USFWS 2009). There will be short-term impacts to refuge visitors during construction of the fire building and long-term impacts to their viewscape from the auto tour route.

### **Effects of Implementation**

Each alternative was evaluated for effects on the physical, biological, and economic environments. As described in the EA, implementing the selected alternative will have no significant impacts (beneficial or adverse) on any of the environmental resources identified in the EA. The proposed action is consistent with the purposes for which the Refuge was established and meets the goals of the Refuge System. The proposed action and its intended benefits are also consistent with the vision of the Refuge (USFWS 2009).

As described in detail in the EA, implementation of the proposed action would be expected to result in the following environmental effects.

#### *Physical Environment*

- Cleaning the ditch to acquire the approximately 757 cubic yards of fill needed for the construction pad and construction of the fire building would cause some soil disturbance and may temporarily increase erosion and sedimentation rates in the project area. These increases are expected to be minor and localized; therefore, they are not expected to have significant effect upon hydrology, geology, soils, or water quality.
- No impacts on contaminants are expected.

- Minor amounts of short-term increases in pollutant emissions are expected. Short-term increases in dust (PM10) and tailpipe emissions (particulate matter, nitrogen oxides, and reactive gases) would result from the heavy equipment used during construction. The minor emission increases caused by the construction would not be considered significant.

#### *Biological Environment*

- A minor impact on vegetation, as some vegetation would be removed for building construction. This site has already been disturbed and consists of primarily non-native invasive species including annual grasses and yellow-star thistle.
- In addition, the ditch will be cleared, deepened, and widened to acquire fill to build the concrete pad for the fire building. Vegetation in this overgrown earthen ditch includes non-native eucalyptus and native bulrush, salt grass, cattails, and willows. The removal of this vegetation will allow irrigation water to flow through the ditch (currently not usable) which will enhance other Refuge wetland habitats containing these plant species.
- The site does not contain any special status plant or animal species and provides only marginal habitat for common resident and migratory species. Some wildlife species may be disturbed during construction of the fire building causing short-term minor impacts. The new fire building and its construction will not effect any endangered, threatened and candidate species.

#### *Social and Economic Environment*

- A minor positive impact on the local economy. The estimated cost of the building is \$1.4 million dollars. This may result in temporary jobs and some supplies may be purchased locally. Construction may benefit the overall local economy.
- No impacts to cultural or historic resources are expected to occur since these sites have already been disturbed. Furthermore, excavation and construction would not be any deeper than the previous disturbances.

**Public Availability:** The Draft EA was available for public review and comment for a 30-day period from July 30, 2009 through August 31, 2009. The document was available on the Complex's website and at the Refuge Headquarters/Visitor Center. As of September 4, 2009, no comments were received; therefore no changes have been made to the EA.


**Conclusions:** Based on review and evaluation of the information contained in the EA, it is my determination that the proposed action, Alternative B does not constitute a major Federal action significantly affecting the quality of the human environment. Accordingly, an environmental impact statement is not required within the meaning of section 102(2)(c) of the National Environmental Policy Act of 1969, as amended. Accordingly, the Service is not required to prepare an environmental impact statement.

This Finding of No Significant Impact and supporting references are on file at the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge Complex, 752 County Road 99W, Willows, California, 95988 (telephone 530-934-2801). These documents can also be found on the Internet at <http://sacramentovalleyrefuges.fws.gov>. These documents are available for public inspection. Interested and affected parties are being notified of this decision.

**References:**

U. S. Fish and Wildlife Service. 2004. Headquarter's Area Eucalyptus Removal Plan for Sacramento National Wildlife Refuge. Willows, CA.

USFWS. 2009. Final Comprehensive Conservation Plan for the Sacramento, Delevan, Colusa, and Sutter National Wildlife Refuges. Sacramento, CA.

  
Assistant Regional Director, Refuges  
Region 8  
U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service

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Date